

Rabies in Arizona



What is rabies?

Rabies is a deadly disease that is caused by a virus that attacks the nervous system. All mammals including humans are susceptible. Rabies is transmitted by contact with saliva of an infected animal, usually through a bite wound. If you think you have been exposed to rabies, make sure that you call your doctor or local health department.

Which animals might have rabies?

Rabies is found mainly in wild animals such as bats, skunks, foxes, raccoons, bobcats, coyotes, etc. Cats, dogs and livestock can also become infected with rabies if rabid wild animals bite them, and they have not been vaccinated. Rodents such as rats, mice, gerbils, guinea pigs, and squirrels are not likely to be infected with rabies.

The best way to protect yourself and your family is to avoid touching, handling, or adopting any wild or stray animals.

How do people get rabies?

People can get rabies from animal bites or, rarely, from infected saliva getting into the eyes, nose, mouth, or an open wound. Brain tissue can also be infectious and should not be handled.

How do I know if an animal has rabies?

The first sign of rabies is usually a change in the animal's behavior. Animals may act more aggressive or more tame than usual. Nocturnal animals like skunks, foxes, and bats may be out during the day. Rabid animals may stagger, tremble, or seem weak. Bats may be found on the ground, unable to fly. Sometimes rabid animals appear agitated and excited or paralyzed and frightened.

If a wild animal does not run away when you approach it, it may be sick or injured. Do not try to help it. ***If an animal is acting strangely, stay away from the animal and call your local rabies animal control office.***



All animal bites should be reported to your local animal control office.

What should I do if an animal bites me?

1. Immediately wash the bite wound with soap and water. If the wound requires medical treatment, call your family doctor.
2. Try to capture the animal without damaging its head or risking further exposure.
3. Notify your local animal control office. If the biting animal is a dog, cat, or livestock animal, they will be placed under 10-14 day observation. If it remains healthy for that period, no risk of rabies transmission exists.

If a bat, skunk, fox, coyote, or other wild animal bites you, it should be presumed rabid until laboratory testing is complete. Call animal control and the health department immediately.

If the animal is not captured, you will need to consult your local animal control officer, your doctor, and the local health department about whether you need to start anti-rabies treatment.

How can I help prevent rabies?

- Have your pet dogs and cats vaccinated against rabies.
- Never leave pet food out in your yard because it will attract wild animals.
- Keep your pets on your property, or use a leash.
- Do not try to separate two fighting animals. Wear gloves if you handle your pet after a fight with a wild animal.
- Teach children not to handle or touch sick or injured animals, including bats.
- If you or your pet has contact with a bat or is bitten by an animal, wash the wound well with soap and water and call your local animal control office.



For more information contact your local health department or:



Arizona Department of Health Services
Bureau of Epidemiology & Disease Control
Office of Infectious Disease Services
Vector-Borne and Zoonotic Diseases
150 N. 18th Avenue, Suite 140
Phoenix, Arizona 85007
Tel: (602) 364-4562 Fax: (602) 364-3198
Toll free: (800) 314-9243

Arizona website: www.azdhs.gov/phs/oids/vector/index.htm
CDC Website: http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/submenus/sub_rabies.htm